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practical manual of 'Astronomical work for amateurs,' the aim of which will be to help the possessors of limited instrumental means to turn their attention to astronomical researches of real scientific utility, special attention being directed to the comparatively new fields of spectroscopy and celestial photography. The book will be published by Messrs. Longmans & Co. Mr. Oliver, in the mean time, invites suggestions from practical workers, which may be sent to him at Lochwinnoch, Scotland.

— 'The weather journal' (Cincinnati, *S. S. Bassler*) is the title of a new weekly paper to be devoted to the general meteorology of the eastern United States, illustrated by tri-daily charts of the movements of the atmosphere and the distribution of atmospheric pressure and temperature.

— The wealth and richness of the illustrations of Mr. I. C. Russell's 'Recent glaciers of the United States' (Fifth annual report, U. S. geol. surv.) would alone give his work value, but they serve only to embellish what without them is a very interesting treatise. Some of the engravings of Mounts Shasta and Dana are especially striking. One is surprised to learn of the extent to which glaciers occur in the United States throughout the northern Sierra Nevada and Rocky mountains, while in the Cascade Mountains are numerous ones, flowing through narrow defiles and over precipices, and, as the author says, by no means unworthy of comparison with the ice-fields of Switzerland and Scandinavia. In Alaska the catalogue is still further extended, embracing numerous examples of alpine glaciers as magnificent as any in the world.

— Professor Chamberlin's paper, in the 'Fifth annual report of the U. S. geological survey,' on artesian wells, is one that cannot help but be of practical value. It was the author's aim to include in convenient form such information relative to the qualifying conditions of artesian wells as may be capable of brief, general statement, and may seem to be serviceable alike to citizen, driller, and geologist; and he has evidently succeeded.

— Some novel and interesting applications of instantaneous photography to the study of the movements of the heart and intestines have recently been made by Dr. W. G. Thompson. Photographs of rabbits', pigeons', cats', and frogs' hearts were made in different stages of systole and diastole, showing the action more clearly and accurately than is possible by other methods. In addition to the value of such in physiological teaching, the most practical application of the

method will be the illustration of the changes in the form of the heart and intestines produced by drugs; and the author believes the process may be further extended to the study of the contractions of the stomach, bladder, and diaphragm, and other viscera.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

* * * Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.

The trade in spurious Mexican antiquities.

A NOTE supplementary to my paper on Mexican pottery, published in your issue of Feb. 19, may be of interest to a number of readers.

The fraudulent specimens referred to reach this country in two ways, — through the agency of travellers who purchased them in Mexico, and through traders who ship them to New York in large lots. From recent observations I have reached the conclusion that there are now in the collections of this country specimens valued at many thousands of dollars, yet which, since they are fraudulent and in every way vicious, are not worth the trouble of breaking up and casting away. Peru is hardly less fully represented, as the factories in that country have been at work for a number of years.

The detection of modern work is in many cases a difficult matter, but in others a decision is easily reached. With reference to the Peruvian frauds, it may be taken for granted that new-looking specimens are new, and, besides, that many old-appearing pieces are new. If exterior appearances are not sufficient to satisfy the collector as to the age of suspected pieces, let him break some very narrow-necked vessel, either of the light terra-cotta colored or of the black ware, and he will probably find that the inside is innocent of any stain of age.

I may add that objects of stone from both of these countries need careful inspection.

W. H. HOLMES.

Washington, D.C.

The anachronisms of pictures.

The articles of Professors Holder and Lockwood (*Science*, vii. 220 and 242) remind me of what I saw many years ago in one of the ladies' magazines, — a picture of the embarkation of the Pilgrims from Delft Haven, with steamships at anchor in the bay. An enterprising artist! — only about two hundred years ahead of his time, and the picture probably 'drawn by our artist on the spot.'

C. G.

Homer, N. Y.

Is the dodo an extinct bird?

It is very improbable that the dodo has been found in the Samoan Islands, alive or fossil. It inhabited the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon in the Indian Ocean. The bird alluded to by Mr. Hopkins as still living in Samoa is probably the *Didunculus*, a specimen of which I well remember in the collection of Sir William Jardine, the famous ornithologist. Sir William thought the *Didunculus* was allied to the dodo and the pigeon.

W. S. SYMONDS.

The camp, Sunningdale, Feb. 29.